

RELEVANCE OF BUDDHIST MANAGEMENT TODAY

- Jasbir Chawla*

Today's world is badly gripped in the claws of Materialism and Consumerism. Though the Scientific achievements have transformed the world into a Global Village, but the peace and happiness which a village actually enjoyed, has vanished all over the globe. This paradox is due, not to a philosophical or technical flaw but to a Managerial Failure.

The lop-sided development and distribution of resources and wealth has widened the gulf between rich and the poor nations. The greed for Power and Market has engulfed the peoples into cross-border terrorism and absurd violence. The unethical business policies and strategies have forced villages into the warfare of hatred and crime.

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The false notions of Efficiency and Competition have fragmented individual men and women into fields of conflicts and tensions. The root cause lies in Managerial Failures.

It is the Buddhist way of Management which can save the world from Environmental disasters, wars and fanatic terrorisms. It is the Buddhist way of Management which can lead the world into peace and prosperity.

Jatak Atthakatha is the Primary source of data to understand Buddhist way of Management.

Jatak Atthakatha is an important part of the Buddhist Canonical literature- Khuddak Nikaya. It was taught in all the disciplines to monks and nuns as a Compulsory subject at all the VIHARS that were Buddhist seats of learning (monasteries) in ancient India. It is narrated so in the travelogues of foreign scholars like Itsen.

There are 547 Jatak tales believed to be related to the past births of Gautam Buddha, who as Bodhisattva, the main character of every tale, dealt with the Problem in a befitting manner. Every tale is like a Management Case study of ancient times when Management had not evolved as a subject for regular course-work. These tales cannot be taken fully as religious or moral stories because many of these are full of vulgarity and many may lead to unethical anti-Buddhist lessons. Since, these had so far not been analyzed from management point of view, their objective was not clear. Portions of these tales were reproduced for children as fables and Moral stories and marketed as cut-pieces from the full Atthakatha.

Actually every *Jatak* tale has five inter-connected parts, including *Gatha* (lyrical hymn-like composition in the ancient language Pali) which is believed to be utterance by Lord Buddha and is central idea of the tale. In the first part Vartman Katha or current story, the problem being discussed by the monks in the Vihar (monastery) is introduced to the reader. Shasta (administrator/Teacher) who is Buddha himself, listens to them and after understanding the problem narrates a story of the previous birth or ancient times (named Ateet katha in Jatak) in which a similar situation was handled by

Bodhisattva in such a way that the most appropriate solution was reached. In the fourth part of the tale, the meaning or the Atthakatha is explained, followed by the concluding fifth part which lists the resembling characters of both the stories. In fact, it is the literary style of those times for telling a story in which a king and a kingdom is a must to be mentioned so that it appears to be a Real story. Moreover, the character of Bodhisattva is a created copy of Buddha, who is striving hard to get Buddhahood (Enlightenment) by practicing Parmitas which are Virtues, the Good Qualities in a human being.

In many stories Bodhisattva is a Tree an ocean or some natural deity or even an animal, exemplifying that good deeds can be performed even by sub-humans by helping someone in distress, the needy and the poor. In many tales, he is only Sky-observer or sea-observer proving a hypothetical character. The idea of linking the two is to make the listener believe its reality.

When deeply researched, it was discovered that Buddha used this psychological technique of enabling the person in trouble to tackle the problem himself. Instead of prescribing some totem or mantra, like other saints –faqirs normally would do, he narrated a story from past in a manner which influenced the listener to analyse the current situation in the light of precedents. Thus, he could take the right action in such a way that intentions of tolerance, brotherhood, ‘good for the mankind’ are observed. The aim is to arrive at an OPTIMAL (samyak) solution. The outcome is a win-win situation, which is the crux of Buddhist Management.

Although, ‘samyak’ can not be obtained as mathematically as optimal solution can be determined today with the help of Computerized Operation Research-techniques, but conceptually has the same connotations. Interestingly, all the Jatak tales describe one or the other managerial problem which we face in today’s world. The solutions depicted in them are very logical and humane. Some of the tales are set up purely in business environment and the ideas of CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF BUSINESS and

ETHICS IN BUSINESS MANAGENENT etc. are highlighted there-in, which we teach today in Management colleges and institutes. WIN-WIN situations are the most welcome solutions to any managerial problem which the advanced knowledge of global village today aims at.

When seen from this angle, JATAK is the most ancient treatise on MANAGEMENT which contains the CASE-STUDIES, interpretable in modern management terminology. It is a TREASURE. Gautam Buddha was a Management Guru of his times as the society was then undergoing a big change in old traditions and rites. He initiated the changes in caste-ridden society and managed them scientifically with the organization of three Gems- Buddha, Dhamma & Sangha. People from all walks of life came to get his blessings and guidance on day- to- day, as well as serious philosophical problems. Even kings and ministers sought his advice on family and state governance matters. He helped them in formulating battle free policies for peaceful co-existence. From this angle, these tales are the true pictures of the-then social and managerial problems and their solutions, in a pragmatic manner, full of wisdom.

MESSAGE OF JATAK IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

The management of change is a very important aspect in the history of any nation. Our country is now 70 years' independent. It has come a long way pursuing the democratic and secular constitution. Still, many challenges are ahead and the country is engulfed in variety of social, cultural, political and security problems, both internally and externally. The lop-sided development as generated a number of administrative problems.

The world scenario is nothing different. Economic crises, Cross-border terrorism, Corruption, Market-wars etc. are some of the indicators which amply prove the overall dissatisfaction and loss of PEACE and HAPPINESS from mankind.

By only making amendments, statutes and laws the desired results could not be produced, because unless and until people accept and

help in implementation, no substantial improvement can be achieved. Involvement of the masses comes through right education. Unfortunately, India is not evolving the education pattern best suited to its needs. She is rather following the imported models which are exploitation based models of Management developed after, the western Renaissance. In Dr. CB Varma's word unfortunately, this renaissance has an ugly facet that has prompted insidious devaluation of the human dignity and values with lustful Colonial policies by subordination of science and technology to Totalitarian ends and imperialistic designs underlying the materialistic rat race inflicting irreparable damages to our social institutional fabrics that exacerbate in broken families and marriages; abandonment of the children and old citizens and a number of social evils. As a result, the country is not producing Ideal Leaders who can successfully manage the changes for an integrated development of the society.

JATAK has the suitable BUDDHIST MANAGEMENT solutions because it has evolved from the experience and wisdom of our own people. It has a lot to contribute to the optimal solution of-----

1. Rising levels of Corruption.
2. Rising Cases of Divorce and Domestic violence.
3. Stressed marital relations.
4. Female feticide
5. Rising number of sexual harassments, rapes of minors and child- abuse
6. Ragging of students, migrant labor and minorities
7. Terrorism and acts of violence
8. Environmental pollution and degradation
9. Rising number of suicides
10. Drug Addiction etc-etc

Asian continent has got both natural and intellectual wealth. It is not only sufficient in terms of (minerals, water, sun, fossil fuels etc) natural resources but also vibrant young intelligent and hardworking manpower. Some countries in this continent are technologically

much advanced and culturally ancient. They have profound wisdom and unique valor to lead the world. India, China & Japan united surpass the military strength of all so called superpowers of the world. Rightly Indian PM Shri Narendra Modi said that 21st Century belongs to ASIA provided Buddhist Way of life perpetuates in these peoples. Gautam Buddha is the light of ASIA which will guide the whole world. Nefarious designs of the multinationals are founded on the politics of division and market hegemony. The unchecked and unheeded growth of capitalism will lead to its nosedive destruction and probable extinction of human race. In this century, therefore onus lies on Asia, to save the universe from the menace of consumerism and terrorism. It is consumerism which is creating mass dissatisfaction and frustration in masses all over the world. This stressed and ill-educated left behind youth of the lot turns to violence. Violence justified and supported by selfish dogmas peculiarly sponsor terror. In turn, terror is converted into a consumer good by the tactical maneuvering of capitalism. The only pragmatic resistance to this phenomenon is to deal with mind or Psyche. There is no other philosophy in the world other than Buddhism which addresses this human software in a very scientific manner. There had been a long history of Buddhism in Asia. Though originated in India, it spread to almost all Asian countries since the reign of emperor Ashok and till today numerous constituent nations of Asia practice this religion in some or other form. Buddhist way of management and governance whenever implemented in these countries yielded peace and prosperity for all. The concept of SAMYAK (optimum), as propounded by Lord Buddha has given rise to new and more useful techniques to the people in this new era of computerization and satellite communication. The Japanese 5 S techniques and 'Just-in-time' Management are the outcrops of Buddhist or SAMYAK Management. But, unfortunately the west is still not ready to accept the OPTIMUM PATH. The misgivings of extreme consumerism and maximization of profits is resulting into chaotic disorder of the world economy. Asian countries have to rise in renaissance and the disproportionate affluence has to be rectified with the help of *samyak* management. If the principle of cause and effect is applied to the

problems of poverty and terrorism, it will be clear that these are gross management failures on the part of world bodies.

Management Case –Studies of Jatak tales provide the managerial skills right from the childhood. It inculcates the managerial abilities in the adolescents and turns the young practicing managers into Ideal Leaders for Nation building.

Jatak is for the world and the whole mankind irrespective of country, language, Colour, Caste, Religion, Creed and Gender. Its message is universal. It may be taught as an independent management thought or as a special discipline in Applied Management institutes or at a unit level in Business Management Courses or as a subject in colleges. The point to stress is that it must be included in the academic curriculum.